



Spinning a Special Spinach Spiel MP3

Gary Crawford [00:00:00] Spinach shoots a food with a long history.

Rachel Schoenian [00:00:03] Spinach is thought to have originated in ancient Persia, which today is modern day Iran.

Gary Crawford [00:00:09] Yes and this piece of music is called in a Persian market. But today we're in a, farmer's market. The VegU-cation tent of the Agriculture Department's Farmers market in Washington D.C. with Chief VegU-cators, Rachel Schoenian and Chantel Oyi, talking about, "spinach". That's right. On this edition of agriculture USA. I'm Gary Crawford. And yes, from Persia. Spinach spread to India and China, arrived in England, in Spain, in the 1300s. Finally, to America, and it does occupy a unique place in U.S. food history and Rachel, why is that?

Rachel Schoenian [00:00:43] Spinach was the first frozen vegetable to be sold commercially.

Gary Crawford [00:00:47] That's right. All because of the work of one American inventor and entrepreneur Clarence Birdseye the second, who is considered the father of the modern-day frozen food industry. Now Rachel, you told us earlier that this guy was a fur trader up in northern Canada in the early 1900s. He was ice fishing up there one time now. You take it from there.

Rachel Schoenian [00:01:07] He discovered that the fish he was catching froze almost instantly after catching, tasted almost fresh when it was thawed out. And he contrasted that with the frozen fish that he had tasted in New York. Which sometimes tasted mushy or was dry when it thawed out.

Gary Crawford [00:01:24] So Birdseye set out in the 1920s to develop ways to flash freeze various foods, to develop ways to package, store, and ship those foods. So, he went on to create a large frozen food company which was very successful.

Birdseye commercial voiceover [00:01:41] Birdseye, Frosted foods. Better buy Birdseye...

Gary Crawford [00:01:45] And you can still find frozen foods carrying the bird's eye brand in your supermarket today. But it all started with spinach which got an additional boost in 1931 with the introduction of the comic strip character who later became a movie cartoon favorite.

Popeye the Sailor voiceover [00:01:59] Oh I'm Popeye the sailor man. I'm strong to the finich, because I eat my spinach. I'm Popeye the sailor man.

Rachel Schoenian [00:02:07] Popeye's favorite food was can spinach which he liked to eat straight from the can.

Gary Crawford [00:02:11] And it gave him instant power to overcome his much bigger opponents and Rachel, reportedly spinach consumption in this country rose significantly in the years after Popeye became a big national hit. And in fact, in 1937 the Texas town of Crystal City, which was in a spinach growing area, erected a big statue of Popeye because

they owed the increase in business to that iconic character and the statue still stands today.

Rachel Schoenian [00:02:36] Awesome.

Gary Crawford [00:02:36] It is but spinach is still not a huge favorite food. Now that may be because...

Shirley Temple voiceover [00:02:42] Pardon me did I hear you say spinach?

Gary Crawford [00:02:42] Yes, I did kids spinach.

Shirley Temple singing voiceover [00:02:46] No spinach...

Gary Crawford [00:02:50] What do you mean no spinach?

Shirley Temple singing voiceover [00:02:50] Take away that awful greenery. I positively refuse to budge. No spinach...

Gary Crawford [00:02:54] Spinach, well that may be the way some kids approach spinach with many of their parents. On the other hand, insisting.

Alice Faye singing voiceover [00:03:03] You gotta eat your spinach baby. If you do, you can't go wrong. For its gonna make you nice and strong...

Gary Crawford [00:03:08] Well and indeed spinach is super high in vitamins B and C and high in iron, calcium, and fiber, low in calories. So, Rachel Schoenian and Chantel Oyi, are out here talking up spinach to folks here at the Farmers Market. But really, tell me true, Rachel down deep, you like spinach or not?

Rachel Schoenian [00:03:28] I'm a big spinach fan. I have to admit that as a kid I was not. But as I've grown up, I've found that it can be tasty if you prepare it the right way.

Gary Crawford [00:03:38] You're gonna be preparing it the right way today?

Rachel Schoenian [00:03:41] Yes. So, we have what we think will be a wildly popular recipe today.

Gary Crawford [00:03:46] Wildly popular! Okay. What are you and Chantel making today?

Rachel Schoenian [00:03:51] Spinach coconut curry with chickpeas.

Gary Crawford [00:03:52] Spinach coconut curry with chickpeas. I see some garlic there on the table too. Chantel is working feverishly over here on that. What have you got?

Chantel Oyi [00:04:02] We have our Red Curry Paste, coconut milk substitute, and chickpeas. And what we'll be doing is sautéing it down, the chickpeas and the garlic, and then adding in our coconut milk and our Red Curry Paste and bringing it to a simmer.

Gary Crawford [00:04:16] Well it's only natural it is Simmertime you know summertime.

Chantel Oyi [00:04:19] And then we're going to toss in our fresh spinach. Just throw it in at the last two minutes and you'll still get that nice not overdone taste.

Gary Crawford [00:04:28] That's pretty good too. Yeah.

Chantel Oyi [00:04:29] It's a great recipe, it's flavorful, and the spinach just gives it a nice taste.

Gary Crawford [00:04:34] Okay. So, kid they proved that spinach can be tasty. So, what do you say now?

Child voiceover [00:04:39] Oh-kay, spinach.

Gary Crawford [00:04:43] Okay spinach. All right. For more delightful recipes using spinach. Go on line to what's cooking USDA what's cooking USDA. This has been agriculture USA. I'm Gary Crawford reporting for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington.